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Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 102: Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (*continued*)
(A/58/86-E/2003/81, A/58/532, A/58/420, A/58/437 and A/58/415-S/2003/952)

1. **Mr. Sambath** (Cambodia) said that, three decades after the category of least developed countries (LDCs) had obtained recognition by the United Nations, the developing countries continued to be in difficulty due to unsustainable debt burdens which had reached alarming proportions, the increasing marginalization of LDCs in international trade and the current situation of the global economy. It was clear that the LDCs did not yet possess the capacity to overcome their difficulties and that accordingly the international community should continue its assistance. Developing countries had to offer their citizens stable economic and social structures conducive to growth and development so that growth was broadly based and able to increase household incomes and enhance food security. Growth also had to provide governments with sufficient revenue to maintain the infrastructure needed for a stable society. The international community must help with the promotion of social investment, education in good governance and the establishment of democratic institutions.

2. The Government of Cambodia had adopted a national poverty reduction strategy in December 2002 to ensure consistency and synergy between its poverty alleviation programmes and those of its development partners. Implementation of the strategy required an improvement in governance, the elimination of corruption and stronger cooperation among related ministries and agencies. However, Cambodia had only recently emerged from many years of war and moved from a period of rehabilitation and reconstruction to one of development. It faced a number of challenges: the diversification of its economy and expansion of its growth base; population growth; the need to develop institutions and strengthen governance; and the need to address poverty alleviation. The help of the international community was needed to enable the Government to strengthen its authority. Cambodia continued to support implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, and called on donor countries to continue their efforts to open up their markets to the LDCs and reduce internal subsidies as well as tariffs in order to allow them to compete on an equal basis. Cambodia would meanwhile do its utmost to ensure that its poverty eradication efforts remained a top priority.

3. **Mr. Maiga** (Mali) expressed considerable concern regarding the low level of implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. The LDCs were still on the margins of the international system, and there was stagnation, or even a cutback, in levels of official development assistance (ODA), persistent external debt, fluctuating commodity prices and difficult access to the markets of developed countries. If the Brussels Programme of Action was not to become a dead letter, all development partners needed to honour their undertakings concerning its effective accelerated implementation through the adoption of specific measures of support.

4. The Brussels Programme of Action recognized the prime responsibility of each LDC to determine and implement development policies and measures. Mali's poverty reduction strategy took account of the concerns and priorities expressed in the Programme of Action, and particularly the seven commitments. The development of human resources and access to basic social services were major strategic objectives of the Government of Mali, requiring priority action in the areas of health and education, housing, water and living conditions, employment and social protection. All those activities required the assistance of the international community. The Government of Mali therefore reiterated its commitment to the Brussels Programme of Action and invited the partners of the LDCs to meet their commitments in terms of ODA, without which those countries would not be in a position to achieve the Millennium Development Goals or the seven commitments contained in the Brussels Programme. The developed countries should also open their markets and reduce subsidies. The delegation of Mali fully supported the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries and invited the donor community to make voluntary contributions to the trust fund. Underdevelopment was a distortion resulting from the relations between rich and poor countries, which were based on unequal trade and exploitation.

5. **Mr. Mpundu** (Zambia) regretted that very little had been achieved in the two years since the Brussels Programme of Action had been adopted. Much more needed to be done both by the LDCs themselves and by their development partners. Zambia was committed to

implementing the Brussels Programme of Action, and a number of meetings had been held with all stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in an effort to publicize it at national level. Zambia had a poverty reduction strategy paper and a transitional national development plan, both of which took the Brussels Programme of Action fully into account. Commitment VII (Mobilizing financial resources) was of essential importance. While every effort was being made to mobilize financial resources at national level, there was a need for Zambia's development partners to honour their commitments and pledges. Some of Zambia's partners had taken positive steps in that direction: in the past year Zambia had signed frameworks of action with Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

6. **Mr. Hassan** (Pakistan) said that the overall condition of LDCs remained precarious and in many cases the situation had worsened: poverty, disease, famine, the lack of human resource development, external debt burden, conflict and strife had remained major obstacles to the development of those countries. Urgent action was needed on a number of fronts to achieve the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action. There would have to be an improvement in the economic and social development indicators of the LDCs, as well as an international climate supportive of their development. That would require the concerted efforts of all relevant stakeholders, particularly by increasing ODA, finding durable solutions to the crippling external debt burden, improving market access for products of export interest to the LDCs and establishing an enabling economic environment which fully supported the domestic policy framework of those countries. In the majority of them, ODA was the bedrock of their development projects, yet there had, regrettably, been a consistent and continuous decline in ODA flows. The crippling burden of external debt was a continuing drain on meagre and dwindling resources, and there was a definite need for new initiatives to provide debt relief, including a debt moratorium, debt swaps and outright cancellation of debt. The proposal to divert the money spent on debt servicing towards the social development budget deserved serious consideration. Trade was another area that could boost economic growth, generate employment and reduce poverty, and Pakistan had noted with concern that the share of the LDCs in international trade had fallen in 2002 to 0.4 per cent. Improved market access to their export products, especially in those areas where they had a comparative advantage, would be essential for their development. An early agreement on the cotton initiative proposed by some of the African LDCs should be explored as a priority. The biggest challenge for the LDCs remained poverty eradication, which would require a multidimensional approach necessitating greater synergy among the efforts of all stakeholders. LDCs had to receive the required support from the international community for the eradication of poverty and had to reach the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Despite its own financial constraints, Pakistan had continued to provide technical, economic and humanitarian assistance to the LDCs, as well as extending trade credits and humanitarian assistance. In order to ensure the fulfilment of the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action, it was important for the international community not only to adopt concrete and tangible measures but also to muster the political will necessary for the achievement of those goals.

7. **Mr. Gleckman** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that UNCTAD had undertaken a wide range of technical cooperation and capacity-building activities in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in addition to its research and policy analysis on those groups over the past year. In the field of investment, they had benefited from programmes aimed at enhancing enterprise development and technological capacities, investment policy reviews, investment guides and training activities on bilateral investment negotiations. In the area of international trade, UNCTAD's focus had been commodity diversification and risk management, trade negotiations and commercial diplomacy. In the area of services infrastructure for development and trade efficiency, several countries from the three categories had been given assistance in customs modernization, trade facilitation and transport improvement, trade point programme assistance, human resource development and e-commerce.

8. In preparation for the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held recently in Cancún, and at the request of the Government of Bangladesh, UNCTAD had provided substantive and technical support to the Second Least Developed Countries

Trade Ministers' Meeting, held in Dhaka from 31 May to 2 June 2003. There had been three major objectives: to take stock of progress in the post-Doha work programme and to make realistic assessments of countries' development concerns and interests; to formulate and harmonize common negotiating positions; and to provide political guidance to trade negotiators in their day-to-day negotiations. The meeting had stressed that market access preferences should be addressed in tandem with other factors which currently impeded productive or supply capacities. It had also noted that market access preferences had helped to reduce or even to eliminate many tariff barriers, but had not removed non-tariff barriers to trade. The meeting had also recognized that some subsidies could also inhibit the ability of LDCs to gain access to markets which had been opened in their development partners. Finally, the meeting had recognized that, in order to help the LDCs to take advantage of existing market access preferences, the level of development assistance to those countries must continue to increase, and with enhanced effectiveness.

9. The Eleventh United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD XI, which was to take place in Brazil in June 2004, should provide operational guidelines for the implementation of several crucial commitments and actions adopted in recent years. UNCTAD XI should also provide clear political guidance on how to take into account the specific circumstances of the vulnerable States in the future work programme of the secretariat, especially in research and policy analysis, technical cooperation and capacity-building, and in its deliberative functions. One of the greatest challenges facing the international community and the LDCs was the prevalence of extreme poverty in those countries and their continued marginalization in the global economy and multilateral trading system. Their full and beneficial integration required that their weak productive capacities be addressed as an urgent priority, including the building of human and institutional capacities related to trade, investment, finance and development. UNCTAD XI should provide an opportunity to focus on those critically important issues and find concrete ways to build domestic supply capacities.

10. **Mr. Husain** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)) said that his organization generally shared the conclusions of the report of the Secretary-General, reflected in paragraphs 60 to 62 of document A/58/86. There were three particular aspects of the report that were of relevance to OIC and its cooperation with the United Nations. Some 23 of the Conference's 57 member States were LDCs, and addressing their social and economic problems was now a matter of priority in its programme of economic and technical cooperation. The previous two decade-long programmes of action for LDCs had remained basically unfulfilled because those countries had not been able to take advantage of globalization and had remained marginalized and exposed to an array of vulnerabilities which had undermined their own efforts. The major challenge for the LDCs and their international development partners — to honour commitments made in Brussels in coordinating institutional initiatives and resource flows with the Brussels Programme of Action — was being taken seriously in OIC. Also, OIC had noted with interest that the majority of the Governments of LDCs had adopted policies and pursued strategies to achieve the goals set out in the Brussels Programme of Action.

11. The Islamic Development Bank a specialized institution of OIC, had established a policy to support the least developed member States in poverty reduction, boosting economic growth and enhancing capacity to manage development projects. The Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry was giving special assistance and attention to the needs of the business community of its least developed member countries in its programme of technical cooperation.

12. **Mr. Nteturuye** (Burundi) said that the slow implementation of the commitments made at Brussels seriously compromised the main objective of the Millennium Declaration, to halve world poverty by 2015. The international community had to act with determination, particularly in the key areas of development assistance, trade and debt. Levels of ODA had increased by about 5 per cent in 2002, following the International Conference on Financing for Development, although the 0.7 per cent target was still a long way off. Nevertheless, initiatives announced by the European Union, the United States of America, Canada and other donors all went in the right direction, although extra efforts were needed, particularly with regard to the LDCs whose marginalization in world trade was a major handicap to their development. The time had come for the international community to develop new mechanisms to stabilize commodity prices. Agricultural subsidies in the developed

countries, which penalized small producers in the developing world, should also be looked at with a much more vigorous political will. As for the debt burden, existing complex mechanisms such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative provided partial solutions, but consideration should be given to debt cancellation. The spread of HIV/AIDS had now reached unacceptable proportions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and the international community had a responsibility to curb it. Finally, he appealed to the donor community to provide more support to countries that were in crisis or emerging from conflict. It was only with genuine international solidarity that a dialogue could be established to restore peace, which was the essential condition for economic and social development.

13. **Mr. Awesso** (Togo) regretted that little progress had been made in addressing the extreme poverty of LDCs described in UNCTAD's The Least Developed Countries Report 2002: Escaping the Poverty Trap. He also cited the vulnerabilities that impeded implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/58/86), including limited capacity, weak direct foreign investment, declining ODA and inadequate debt relief measures.

14. One of the 49 least developed countries, Togo had had trouble implementing the Programme of Action because some major development partners had suspended assistance, thereby undermining national economic and social efforts. Despite such difficulties, however, his Government continued to attach great importance to the Programme and, with the support of partners, had taken steps to improve lives at the local level, including building health clinics and schools and extending microcredit to the poor, as well as national programmes to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Without the necessary support from development partners, however, efforts to execute the Programme of Action and commitments made in the Brussels Declaration were bound to fail. His delegation called on development partners to provide the necessary technical assistance and to open their markets to the LDCs in order to significantly ease their debt burden.

15. The United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and other international organizations must strengthen cooperation to promote poverty reduction strategies. The Office of the High Representative must also be given the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate. Finally, his delegation welcomed the decision of the Economic and Social Council to devote its next high-level segment to the LDCs.

16. **Mr. Cajuste** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the Community was convinced that the Brussels Programme of Action would promote sustainable development. The international community must cooperate fully to meet that challenge.

17. LDCs suffered from a low rate of savings, investment and growth, which exacerbated poverty and heightened social tensions. Regrettably, the effects of poverty, including malnutrition, high infant mortality and disease continued to ravage the least developed countries. In 2002, 42 million people had been HIV-positive, and 841 million had been undernourished. The heavy debt burden of LDCs continued to thwart investment and development initiatives. Developed countries must eliminate customs barriers, open their markets to the least developed countries and abolish agricultural subsidies. The political will and solidarity expressed at recent major international conferences, including in Monterrey and Johannesburg, must be strengthened. Furthermore, the fight against terrorism must in no way compromise efforts to combat poverty.

18. CARICOM welcomed the decision to devote the next high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council to the LDCs, which would require the full participation of international donors and the LDCs themselves. It urged States that had not done so to incorporate the Brussels Programme of Action into their national policies. It also fully supported the initiatives of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and appealed to donors to contribute to its trust fund.

19. Haiti, the only least developed country in the region, would celebrate two hundred years of independence in 2004. CARICOM believed that Haiti should be supported in its social and economic efforts.

20. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) affirmed FAO's support for the initiatives of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and for the Brussels

Programme of Action. FAO had always been concerned by the development challenges, including food insecurity and dependence on food imports, of the some 650 million people living in the LDCs. She emphasized commitments III, IV, V and VI of the Programme.

21. At LDCs' request, FAO provided sectoral technical cooperation and emergency assistance funded from its regular programme or extrabudgetary resources in partnership with bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, private sector and civil society. The Special Programme for Food Security in 62 developing countries was among its main efforts to halve the number of people suffering from hunger by 2015. It was also encouraging developed countries to share their experience and expertise in agriculture and rural development.

22. FAO emergency assistance had increased from $4 million in 2000 to $26.6 million in 2002. Its direct support for programmes in the field for the LDCs heavily depended on extrabudgetary funding. The decline of ODA to agriculture was a matter of concern. FAO urged the international community to renew its focus on agriculture and rural development and pursue such long-term strategies as those outlined in the Brussels Programme of Action, the Millennium Declaration and the Declaration of the World Food Summit (A/57/499) in order to eliminate hunger.

23. **Mr. Latheef** (Maldives) said that the slow pace of implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action had dimmed hopes for the LDCs' sustained economic growth and integration into the world economy. His Government was greatly concerned that hasty upgrading of the status of LDCs might end the very preferential trading arrangements and technical assistance that made their progress possible, thereby impeding implementation of the Programme of Action.

24. Assistance and cooperation from the international community were crucial for Maldives to reach the growth and investment targets of the Programme. His Government had paid particular attention to people-centred development. Efforts had also been made to build human and institutional capacity. Obstacles to integration into the world economy included insufficient resources, infrastructure and skills. Although his Government was making every effort to meet its responsibilities under the Programme of Action, much remained to be done. His delegation therefore stressed that removing Maldives from the list of least developed countries would seriously undermine those efforts.

25. **Ms. Corkery** (United States of America) believed that the Brussels Programme of Action should involve all stakeholders to meet countries' specific needs and capacities and promote national responsibility, good governance, aid effectiveness and private investment. The Millennium Challenge Account of the United States Agency for International Development was a demonstration of her Government's commitment to those principles.

26. A critical function of the Office of the High Representative was to oversee the mainstreaming of the Brussels Programme of Action. She encouraged resident coordinators and country teams to work with Governments to identify key poverty indicators and increase national data-collection capacity to monitor progress on development goals. The collection of data by the Office and the use of a matrix of achievement would be inefficient. The Office should use existing tools such as poverty reduction strategy papers, international development indicators, including those in the Millennium Declaration, and multilateral development bank publications of economic and social indicators. The Office of the High Representative, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD should strengthen cooperation and avoid duplication. She expressed satisfaction that the High Representative had established working relations with other multilateral organizations and was promoting linkages to civil society and commended the Office for encouraging national forums and regional and South-South cooperation.

27. **Mr. Abreha** (Ethiopia) said that the LDCs had remained vulnerable and marginalized despite previous programmes of action. The Brussels Programme of Action, however, was geared to sustainable development and integration into the global economy, and the seven commitments contained therein offered useful guidelines for reviewing implementation of the Programme.

28. The poverty reduction strategy papers had helped Ethiopia and other countries to develop people-centred national policy frameworks in partnership with civil society and the private sector at all levels. His delegation also welcomed the efforts by the Economic Commission for Africa to promote dialogue among

development stakeholders and the steps taken by the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development to enhance good governance through peer review mechanisms.

29. He encouraged the Office of the High Representative to update the human development indicators. The LDCs needed support in tackling supply-side constraints to benefit from preferential trading arrangements. The Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank should consider funding diversification programmes.

30. His delegation attached particular importance to the commitment to reduce vulnerability and protect the environment and appealed for support of Ethiopia's national food security programme. Ethiopia had introduced a value-added tax to improve domestic resource mobilization and established incentives to attract domestic and foreign investment.

31. His delegation expressed its appreciation to the countries listed in paragraph 52 of the Secretary-General's report (A/58/86) that had devoted at least 0.2 per cent of gross national income to ODA for the LDCs and urged other Governments to follow their example. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, which had been seriously jeopardized by the loss of commodity export earnings, should be revitalized.

32. In conclusion, his delegation welcomed the decision to devote the 2004 Economic and Social Council high-level segment to implementation of the Programme of Action.

33. **Mr. Fasehun** (World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)) said that the use of intellectual property to promote social and cultural development was a priority of his delegation and identified five areas in which WIPO was working to extend the benefits of intellectual property protection to the least developed countries.

34. First was the WIPOnet, the Organization's global communications network linking connected parties, including 25 least developed countries, granting access to a large store of information on intellectual property and fostering digital inclusion. Secondly, the WIPO Worldwide Academy provided teaching, training and research to enable LDCs to take advantage of the intellectual property system. Thirdly, WIPO sought to protect the copyrights of musical artists through the development of adequate legislation and collective management organizations to ensure that they received payment for the use of their works. Fourthly, WIPO was promoting broad participation in discussions of intellectual property issues regarding genetic resources, traditional knowledge and expressions of folklore. Lastly, the Organization had created a CD-ROM and organized workshops, including a regional workshop on implementation of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, in Dar-es-Salaam, to enable small and medium-sized enterprises to better utilize the intellectual property system.

35. In conclusion, WIPO was committed to assisting LDCs to create strong intellectual property rights institutions, meet their treaty obligations and use intellectual property to promote development.

36. **Mr. Taboul** (Sudan) noted that, despite the hopes raised by the Brussels Programme of Action, the LDCs had become increasingly marginalized in international trade as a result of globalization. Their economic situation had deteriorated as a result of a significant drop in ODA and foreign direct investment, together with an increase in foreign debt service payments and the obstacles impeding their access to markets. Thus, nearly three years after the adoption of the Brussels Programme of Action, there was no sign that it would be any more successful than the two earlier programmes.

37. The collapse of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún had sent a clear message to the LDCs, which saw that the slogans concerning trade and development to which they had agreed in Doha were without substance. Those countries depended absolutely on their exports of agricultural produce; the support provided by the developed countries to their own agriculture sector not only threatened millions of poor people in the LDCs but absorbed the limited amounts available as ODA. The arguments put forward at the Cancún Ministerial Conference by a number of LDCs concerning cotton were a clear indication of the lack of balance in international trade which threatened the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the future participation of LDCs in international trade. The calls by those countries for a just trading system for their products, for access to markets and for the granting of preferential terms and the removal of existing barriers to trade should therefore be heeded.

38. Many of the LDCs were facing or had recently emerged from armed struggle or suffered from natural disasters or complex humanitarian emergencies further exacerbated by their fragile economies and lack of financial resources and infrastructure. In that context, his delegation welcomed resolution 2003/17 entitled "Programme of Action for the Least-Developed Countries" recently adopted by the Economic and Social Council, which called for the special needs of the LDCs to be addressed so as to ensure a smooth transition for those countries from assistance to development. His delegation also called on the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and other United Nations bodies and organizations that had adopted resolutions incorporating the Brussels Programme of Action into their activities to translate those resolutions into specific measures to be reflected in reports to the Second Committee and to the forthcoming high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council that would be considering the status of implementation of the programme of action for the LDCs.

39. His country was committed to the Brussels Programme of Action and had undertaken to play its part in the implementation of the seven commitments contained therein. In order to ensure coordinated implementation, a high-level national forum had been set up and national focal points had been designated. The LDCs themselves were primarily responsible for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and for the promotion of sustainable development. However, they could not attain the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action without financial and technical support from development partners and the international community.

40. In conclusion, he expressed his appreciation to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries and hoped that future reports would reflect substantive progress in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the role played by both the LDCs and the development partners.

41. **Mr. Penjor** (Bhutan) said that his country had made progress towards fulfilling the Brussels Programme of Action by effectively integrating the seven commitments into the national development strategy. While Bhutan had enjoyed annual economic growth of 6 per cent on average over the last two decades and life expectancy had increased to 66 years, poverty was still a serious problem owing to low productivity in and low earnings from agriculture, the mainstay of the economy. Bhutan faced many serious structural and geographical constraints that made it difficult for its products to reach the global market.

42. While primary responsibility for the implementation of the Programme of Action lay with the LDCs, even the most assiduous efforts by those countries to overcome many of those structural impediments would be doomed to failure without the support of the international community. In that regard, he urged development partners to provide the necessary financial, capacity-building and market access support to LDCs, since such support was critical for sustaining the political and economic reforms under way. He welcomed the decision of the Economic and Social Council to dedicate the high-level segment of its 2004 session to LDCs.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/3, A/58/84, A/58/96, A/58/151, A/58/152, A/58/193, A/58/204, A/58/383, A/58/413 and A/C.2/58/2)

43. **Mr. Civili** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-'gency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), commenting on the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/3), said that a number of proposals had emerged from the first General Assembly High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, including some on how the Council could more effectively help to maintain the momentum for the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The issue of trade had remained the focus of attention in almost every multilateral meeting. The lack of progress at the Cancún meeting, particularly in the area of agriculture, had heightened concerns with respect to trade. In that regard, it was urgent to bring the WTO negotiations back on track and to ensure that development occupied a central place on the Doha Agenda.

44. The high-level segment of the Council's most recent substantive session had been instrumental in putting rural development back on the international agenda. It had called for looking at rural development from the economic as well as social and environmental perspectives in the spirit of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. The Ministerial Declaration provided important guidance

on how rural development could best help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals. Noting that concern had been expressed at the Council's latest substantive session about the slow pace of progress in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, he announced that the Council had decided to devote its high-level segment in 2004 to resource mobilization and creation of an enabling environment for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

45. Referring to the Council's enhanced role within the United Nations system, he said that it would explore ways of further strengthening its ties with the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO, so that they would address the whole spectrum of issues in economic and social development and their interrelationships. Furthermore, the Council's management of its subsidiary bodies should be made more substantive and policy-oriented. It should also have the necessary flexibility to convene and respond to challenges or situations involving the coordination of policies in various sectors. That would make its work more relevant to the global economic scene.

46. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the role of public administration in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/58/152), he said that the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals were expressions of the resolve of leaders of the international community to make globalization inclusive and equitable. Attaining those goals and other internationally agreed development goals depended, inter alia, on strengthening governance at all levels. In that regard, since 1999 the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had been closely involved in the organization, with Governments, of global forums on reinventing government. Capacity development workshops organized by the Department within such forums enabled government officials to share information, experiences and best practices. Countries could therefore benefit from the lessons learned and innovations being introduced in other countries and leapfrog stages of development. However, sharing of experiences and adaptation of successful practices did not imply that there was a single solution for all problems. Each country had to choose the best practices that were most suited to its needs and its indigenous capacity. Innovations like e-government should follow that principle. The United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) had become a powerful tool and was effectively promoting the exchange of expertise and sharing of experience and lessons learned in public administration. Currently, UNPAN was the biggest network on public administration in the world. While the United Nations was in a position to assist Member States in that sector, Governments themselves should be in the driver's seat and would have to ultimately conceptualize, elaborate and implement the necessary reforms to meet the challenges of globalization.

47. **Mr. Frangialli** (World Tourism Organization), reporting on the main activities undertaken and some of the results achieved in the course of the International Year of Ecotourism, said that the most important result was the mobilization of a wide variety of tourism stakeholders throughout the world. Preparations for the International Year had begun as early as September 2000 by encouraging Governments and the private sector to create national ecotourism committees to organize national and local activities and then become permanent coordination committees beyond 2002. At the same time, his organization had undertaken a series of research projects on ecotourism markets and on good practices in ecotourism.

48. Ten preparatory conferences had been organized in different regions of the world, which had attracted over 3,000 participants from Governments, private enterprises, non-governmental organizations and the academic community. Similar events had also been organized by UNEP and other partners that had culminated in the World Ecotourism Summit in Canada in May 2002. The Summit's main result, the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism, had become a blueprint for ecotourism development and management. His organization was now assisting a number of countries to implement the 49 recommendations contained in the Declaration.

49. The International Year of Ecotourism had provided an effective mechanism to encourage Governments, international and regional organizations, the tourism private sector and non-governmental organizations to achieve the aims of Agenda 21 in promoting sustainable development and protection of the environment through tourism. The Year had also highlighted the potential that sustainable tourism in general offered as a powerful instrument for combating poverty. He urged the international community to strengthen its efforts to help Governments, particularly

those of developing and least developed countries, inter alia, to define sustainable tourism policies, better plan tourism development and monitor its impact on their countries, as well as to extend the benefits of tourism to the poorer segments of their communities.

50. **Mr. Benmellouk** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, endorsed the views expressed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs with regard to the tasks that the Council needed to undertake in 2004. Referring to the report on public administration and development, he noted that public administration was vital to achieving the development objectives of developing countries. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization on Ecotourism (A/58/96) and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

51. **Mr. Bernardini** (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, welcomed the draft agreement for the conversion of the World Tourism Organization into a specialized agency of the United Nations. The European Union was already cooperating with it in various areas such as the fight against child sex tourism, democratization and respect for human rights and technical and statistical methods.

52. If tourism were wisely developed, it could play a significant role in sustainable development and generate benefits for the poor. Tourism was driven by private-sector investment and it directly or indirectly generated much needed GDP sustained growth, jobs and investments in developing countries. It also fostered mutual understanding among different cultures and traditions. However, terrorism or the outbreak of communicable diseases, for example, could have a dire effect on economies that were heavily dependent on tourism for their revenues. Transforming the World Tourism Organization into a specialized agency would give the United Nations system a greater understanding of tourism's benefits and challenges and a more comprehensive view of its potential contribution to development.

53. **Mr. Neil** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, while CARICOM welcomed the ongoing initiatives by the Economic and Social Council to use innovative approaches to policy development and coordination, it still believed that greater efforts could be made to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council and promote coordination within the United Nations system. In his view, more benefits could be gained from the annual spring meeting between the Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). For example, the meeting should produce a more practical and action-oriented document which committed each institution to concrete steps to address areas of inconsistency in policy and operational activities. With respect to the level of participation, CARICOM welcomed the involvement of WTO and the invitation to the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD to participate in future meetings, since such wider participation would ensure that different perspectives were considered. Furthermore, participation could be widened to other relevant bodies, allowing a richer exchange of views and a more comprehensive and coherent approach to crucial development issues. There was also a need for ongoing contact between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD in order to ensure consistent dialogue on ways to improve coherence and coordination. Therefore, modalities and an appropriate mechanism should be identified to ensure an ongoing cross-fertilization of ideas and to encourage policy and programme coordination of those institutions to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

54. The deliberations in the respective segments of the substantive session of the Council had been useful in identifying crucial policy and operational challenges requiring the urgent attention of the international community. The overriding concern in the high-level segment was the need to develop effective policy approaches and strategies to advance poverty eradication and overall development. While the Ministerial Declaration of the segment was a satisfactory outcome and a valuable contribution of the United Nations system to the various aspects of rural development, the Council must now focus on follow-up to the recommendations made and keep the issue of rural development and its links with the achievement of the Millennium Goals at the forefront of its work.

55. As for the operational activities segment, its discussions had revealed several areas of weakness. The major concern remained the ongoing decline in contributions to the regular resources of United

Nations funds and programmes. For the United Nations to play an effective role in development, adequate and predictable funding was needed. Therefore, decisive action should be taken on a number of proposals made during that segment to improve the funding activities for development, such as diversifying the donor base and reviewing the system of annual voluntary contributions. CARICOM hoped that the outcome of that segment would help to transform the work of relevant bodies within the United Nations system. In that context, it supported the recommendations with regard to the Common Country Assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in the light of the Council's request that the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies should ensure the integration of their operational activities for development with national development efforts.

56. On the general issue of coordination, CARICOM expected the Council to take the necessary steps for the effective implementation of provisions of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B relevant to its work and to the work of its subsidiary machinery, and to keep the implementation under review. While CARICOM welcomed the request by the General Assembly for the establishment of a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment, it believed that there was a need to maintain a degree of flexibility in the work of the Council to allow it to consider new and emerging issues. Furthermore, in its follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, monitoring of concrete progress on the various targets set by such conferences should be the central role of the Council.

57. As far as the humanitarian segment was concerned, CARICOM welcomed the focus on humanitarian financing and the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. The outcome to that segment should encourage greater financing for humanitarian assistance through the United Nations system and the incorporation of HIV/AIDS into humanitarian planning.

58. While the general segment had been broadly satisfactory, there had been a clear sense that the Council had failed to give enough attention to its oversight function, partly because of pressures of time. In order to increase in-depth consideration of issues and better manage and oversee subsidiary bodies, CARICOM believed that consideration should be given, for example, to dividing the substantive session into two phases and extending that session, particularly the general segment, over a longer period of time. While efforts had been made to reform and revitalize the Council, a specific mechanism was not yet available to channel and coordinate all reform initiatives. It would therefore be appropriate to create an ad hoc committee to examine and report on current initiatives. In that regard, the informal proposals by the current President of the Council could form a useful basis for discussion.

59. The late preparation and distribution of documents during the most recent session had created serious difficulties for delegations. While CARICOM fully appreciated the constraints placed on the Secretariat, it also believed that there was an urgent need to address the question of the timely issuance of documentation in future sessions.

60. Turning to the report on ecotourism (A/58/96), he noted that, since the economies of CARICOM member States depended to a large extent on tourism, they were especially cognizant of the importance of promoting ecotourism. They welcomed the activities undertaken during the International Year of Ecotourism and encouraged the World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to continue their support for the development of ecotourism. CARICOM also welcomed the follow-up recommendations contained in the report.

61. **Mr. Pavlovich** (Belarus) said that the high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions had been better prepared than similar meetings in the past and had concentrated on the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The high-level segment of the Council's substantive session had given many developing countries valuable guidance in promoting an integrated approach to rural development, while the operational activities segment had provided an opportunity for detailed discussion of ways to improve the financing of operational activities for development. His delegation welcomed the Council's decision to develop a multi-year programme for its coordination segment, which must monitor the implementation of the decisions of the big United Nations conferences. The humanitarian affairs segment had successfully focused on urgent aspects of the Organization's work in that area. The creation of such bodies as the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi would supplement rather than duplicate the work of the

Security Council on the post-conflict rehabilitation of African and other countries.

62. In contrast, the general segment of the substantive session had been rather disappointing. In particular, the overloaded agenda had prevented the Council from performing its oversight and management functions, at a time when its functional commissions were pushing forward with the implementation of the decisions taken at the major international conferences. Belarus supported the decision to devote the high-level segment in 2004 to resource mobilization for poverty reduction, one of the most important elements of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

63. The Council could considerably improve its coordination role in that implementation process by establishing closer links with the specialized agencies and regional commissions, the Bretton Woods institutions, and inter-agency bodies. The proposals of the President of the Council for further reform deserved thorough consideration, but no hasty decisions should be taken. Belarus could support the suggestion to split the operational activities segment into two parts in order to provide an opportunity for annual consideration of the results of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The current lack of attention to operational funds and programmes had adversely affected their effectiveness. The rationalization of the agenda of the general segment was also welcome because the Council would have more time for drafting political recommendations on the activities of the functional commissions. The proposals to hold high-level meetings of the operational activities and humanitarian affairs segments biennially in alternate years and to split the substantive session into two parts should be considered in conjunction with the question of the revitalization of the General Assembly, especially as similar proposals had been made with regard to structural changes in the Assembly's regular sessions. Belarus was ready to make its contribution to the process of reforming the Council and hoped that delegations would support its candidacy for membership of the Council for the period 2004-2006.

64. **Mr. Balestra** (San Marino) said that tourism had become an integral part of the globalization process, was the major source of world trade, and had an extraordinary impact on developing and industrialized countries. As well as being an efficient poverty-reduction instrument, for some countries it was the only means of survival. For those reasons San Marino strongly supported the transformation of the World Tourism Organization into a specialized agency, which would allow the United Nations to coordinate world tourism activities and monitor developments in the sector. Tourism had been able to survive the serious impact of recent terrible events, and San Marino hoped that it would continue to do so. He noted that San Marino, in conjunction with Italy, would host the meeting of the organization's Commission for Europe in May 2004.

65. **Ms. Pià-Comella** (Andorra) said that Andorra had taken an active part in the negotiation of the agreement between the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization and hoped that the Committee and the General Assembly would adopt draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.29. The inclusion of tourism in the reports of the Secretary-General would enrich the analyses of development and of the work of the United Nations in general.

66. **Mr. Madrid** (Mexico) said that the action to be taken by the Committee had a double significance: just recognition both of tourism as a social phenomenon and of the importance of the work of the World Tourism Organization in consolidating tourism's strategic role. The capacity of tourism to provide concrete solutions to the enormous challenges facing mankind was beyond doubt, not least because tourism was the world's leading export activity. Shortly after the events of 11 September the fourteenth General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization had considered the enormous challenges facing tourism and had decided that opportunities could be found even in adversity: to find ways of navigating in unknown waters and to invest the discussion of the importance of tourism with a political dimension. The present occasion represented one of the answers to those challenges. Mexico had always had close links with the World Tourism Organization, ever since the decision to establish the organization had been taken in Acapulco in 1970. It intended to continue those links, which had brought only benefits for Mexican tourism.

67. **Mr. Nuñez** (Spain) said that Spain's experience over recent decades demonstrated the possibilities of tourism as a means of economic, social and political transformation. As the headquarters country of the World Tourism Organization, Spain found it particularly satisfying that the organization was the

first intergovernmental organization since 1985 to consolidate its links with the United Nations system as a specialized agency. Its transformation into a specialized agency would encourage those States which were not yet members to join and make it truly universal. Such challenges as terrorism and pandemics only reinforced the case for universality in the attainment of the organization's goals, notably with regard to the environmental impact of one country's tourism activities on its neighbours or the impact of tourism on migratory flows. Spain welcomed the recent admission to membership in the World Tourism Organization of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait and the imminent admission of Estonia.

68. **Mr. Doig** (Peru) said that the Peruvian delegation had taken an active part in the Committee on Negotiations and supported the transformation of the World Tourism Organization into a specialized agency. It was especially grateful for the report of the Secretary-General on the International Year of Ecotourism (A/58/96), an area of special interest to Peru. It recognized the importance of tourism as an engine of development and a tool of conservation. Tourism would make an important contribution to the attainment of the goals of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

69. **Mr. Stanislavov** (Russian Federation) said that the outstanding features of the Council's summer session had been its concentration on real problems of global development and an enhancement of its potential as a coordinating body for the adoption of decisions determining the parameters of international cooperation for the sustainable growth of all countries. The political basis for such cooperation was to be found in the decisions of the United Nations global forums and in the Millennium Development Goals. The main implementation mechanism was the partnerships between developed and the developing countries and the private and civil sectors. The political outcome of the session offered convincing proof of the claim that the United Nations was the unique mechanism for the adoption of multilateral approaches to pressing problems.

70. The Russian Federation supported the initiative to transform the World Tourism Organization into a specialized agency. The move would increase its influence on world tourism and give a boost to tourism as an instrument of sustainable development, as well as enhancing the cooperation between the organization and other United Nations programmes, funds and agencies and improving the coordination of their work. The Russian delegation was of course in favour of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.29.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.